

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Press Conference on Release of USCIRF Report on Religious Freedom Conditions in Iraq**

**Tuesday, Dec. 16, 2008, 10:30-11:30 a.m.  
Capitol Hill, room TBA**

Although there has been some reduction in violence in Iraq since the Commission's last report on the country in May 2007, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom remains seriously concerned about severe violations of religious freedom there. The situation is dire for Iraq's smallest religious minorities, including ChaldoAssyrian Christians, other Christians, Sabeen Mandaean, and Yazidis, who face a threat to their very existence in the country. While there has been some reconciliation between Shi'a and Sunni Iraqis, there are still concerns regarding attacks and tense relations between these communities. There also continue to be serious, religiously-motivated human rights abuses against women and girls, Muslims who reject orthodox interpretations of Islam, homosexuals, and academics.

The Commission will hold a press conference on Tuesday, Dec. 16, at 10:30 a.m. to release its newest report. Policy Focus Iraq presents a detailed exploration of the conditions bearing on the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief in Iraq and sets forward comprehensive policy recommendations for the incoming U.S. Administration, including in the areas of ensuring safe and fair elections, making prevention of abuses against religious minorities a top priority, addressing religious extremism, and improving the conditions for refugees and internally displaced people.

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